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**Oberholtzer, Ellis P.** *The Referendum, Initiative and Recall in America.* Pp. xii, 533. Price, \$2.25. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1911.

Dr. Oberholtzer has added to his splendid work on "The Referendum in America" four supplementary chapters entitled, respectively, The Initiative and the Referendum in the States; The Local Referendum, Home Rule for Cities, Commission Government, etc.; The Recall; and The Referendum *vs.* the Representative System. As all know of the high merit of the original volume it is necessary here to speak only of the supplementary chapters.

In these added chapters, the author is unfortunately no longer the investigator but the advocate. He has a thesis to prove and that, in essence, is that the Initiative, Referendum, Recall, Commission Government, etc., are all measures pushed by a "junta of lobbyists," "a socialistic group of agitators," "for socialistic purposes much closer to the hearts of their inventors." He sees in the movement only "an attack on the representative system." He admits evils and abominations in the representative system, to be sure, but declares them to be "evils of the people's own making." "Such abominations," he continues "are an accurate reflection of their own minds and morals." Even if this be true, and few indeed are the students of government who feel it is, is it not at least possible that these movements are the result of a desire on the part of the people to throw off their own "abominable" mistakes and chasten their own minds and morals? The author deplores that democracy is being "released from the checks which were established for it," but does not inquire whether those checks were ever sound in theory or have ever worked in practice. He believes all these movements to be the outgrowth of a "socialistic unrest" in the "frontier states"—like *California*—(just where individualism is strongest) and finds nothing akin to the movement in that foreign country, Philadelphia, in which he chances to dwell. His statements do not have always the merit of getting at the root of the matter.

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**Whetham, W. C., and Catherine D.** *Heredity and Society.* Pp. viii, 190. Price, \$2.00. New York: Longmans, Green & Co., 1912.

The making of books whose object is to direct attention to the relation of biology to national life and character goes on apace. We may not rely on blind forces of nature which may produce good or evil types. Society must now control.

After a brief introduction, Variation and Heredity are described in the second chapter. Natural Selection is treated in the third. Formerly competition eliminated the weak. In modern civilization the great factor in selection is disease. As we come to control disease we may be weakening this selective act and thus injuring society by preserving the unfit. This does not excuse a neglect policy. It merely indicates the growing complexity of the case. In training persons for social work the role of heredity must be carefully taught.

The Biological Aspect of Religion is the suggestive title of the fourth chapter. The authors think that the materials for this discussion are not yet collected and they only hint at some of the probable results. Religious sanctions have

impelled self-sacrifice, have driven groups into battle and must have influenced survival. The history of the Jews is perhaps the best illustration. The survival value of Christianity is not yet clear. In some groups the birth rate is held up but in Protestant groups no sufficient incentive is found. In so far as present religion devotes itself to the failures of society, it will be a source of weakness.

The birth rate in England showed no artificial restriction till 1875. Since then there has been a marked change. If this means a decrease in families of ability, the future is ominous.

These positions sufficiently indicate the general attitude of the book. The authors feel that too much emphasis is to-day laid on schemes of social amelioration, on plans for equalizing opportunities and far too little on the biological basis of society. So in the later chapters, *The Position of Women*, *Education*, *Heredity and Politics*, *The Purpose of Life*, are treated. The discussion is always stimulating. The evidence opposed is often incomplete, the conclusions open to revision. This the authors frankly recognize. Therefore, without adding anything specifically new, the authors have produced a just and readable treatment of real issues that will interest and hold many people.

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